

# 45 Ideas...

to Promote Parent, Family, Community,  
and School Engagement

Adapted from: Working Together Toolkit 2006 [www.cesdp.nmhu.edu](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu) \* [www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

**The goal of sharing information and building trusting relationships between school, families, and communities is reflected in the practices listed below.**

- Ensure that all materials sent home are clear, user friendly, and presented in a way that all parents can read and understand.
- Communicate in language that is jargon-free. Utilize translators as necessary.
- Build policies and systems that support teachers in communicating frequently with parents about student goals, curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can support student learning.
- Consider communication etiquette and taboos within the community.
- **Make it Positive:** Teachers most often communicate with parents when the student misbehaves, yet parents also want to know when their child is doing well. This helps parents be more responsive to both positive and challenging needs that may need to be addressed.
- **Make it Practical:** By helping parents understand the curriculum, they will be better able to support their child's academic achievement. Make specific suggestions about what parents can do to help their child manage difficulties they are having with schoolwork and help them build their child's strengths.
- **Make it Personal:** Collaboration between parents and teachers is enhanced when parents read or hear something personal about their child. Include specific examples and be as detailed as possible.
- **Make it Accessible:** By meeting families in their own natural environment, rather than only at the school, educators are seen as reaching out to families and acknowledging them as partners.
- Use a wide variety of methods for reaching parents such as print form, email, phone, Facebook, TV, radio, newspapers, extracurricular events, and through parent centers.
- Work to build the trust and confidence of parents through meet and greet opportunities near areas where students are dropped off and picked up, in the family center, and in classrooms.  
Put a chart or diagram of the school's organization in the school handbook. Explain how and when parents can contact the principal, teachers, counselors, and other staff. Let them know step by step how to resolve an issue or concern.

**The sample practices listed below focus on collaborating with the community.**

- Invite community business members to share information about careers and to serve on school committees.
- Provide opportunities for students, school staff, and families to serve their community (recycling, art, music, drama, environmental projects, etc.)
- Request participation in events held in community locations such as chapter houses, churches, community centers, businesses, and organizations.
- Publicize successful changes in a school program as result of family and community engagement. Publicize in a variety of ways such as marquees, newsletters, websites, e-mail, texts, calls, and at events.
- Incorporate community service projects into the curriculum and instruction.
- Work with PTA, parent leaders, and community members to organize health fairs, college prep fairs, and other events that provide active participation of students and families, school staff, and community members.
- Include businesses, seniors, and all members of the community in the list of recipients of newsletters (Web-based and paper), announcements and upcoming events and news.
- Work with the community to provide a resource directory and one-stop shopping for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, adult education, and other service agencies.

**The sample practices listed below focus on supporting decision making and advocacy.**

- Actively recruit and engage parents in developing and supporting district and school wide policies and improvement plans through parental advisory committees.
- Treat parent concerns, suggestions and ideas with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions. Create and adhere a policy to always follow up with families in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- Share the school and district annual reports of overall student and school achievement, school programs, and other initiatives with families. Use open meetings, events, websites and newsletters, etc. to create safe opportunities for families to ask questions and provide input.
- Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups on advisory councils, action teams, and committees. Include student representatives in elementary, middle, and high schools along with parents on committees.
- Encourage and facilitate parent participation in PTA or other parent organizations, advisory councils or committees for parent leadership and participation.
- Provide parents with user-friendly information for voting in local, state, and federal elections on officials and issues that affect education.

**The sample practices listed below focus on increasing volunteerism.**

- Use surveys as resources to gather parent and family volunteer information including skills and talents. Provide opportunities for those who are able to volunteer during the day, those who are able to volunteer on a regular basis and those who can participate occasionally. Be sure to follow up with volunteers on a timely basis.
- Provide initial and ongoing guidance to volunteers. Provide a consistent place and process for parent volunteers to sign in and list the hours they serve.
- Create roles for parents on decision making and advisory committees, properly training them for areas in which they will serve (e.g., curriculum, budget, or school safety).
- Seek and use input from volunteers regarding school climate, program structures, or other target areas.
- Regularly show appreciation for parent participation and contributions by providing certificates, luncheons, or recognition on marquees, websites, and/or newsletters.
- Provide information about volunteer opportunities in a variety of ways including mail outs, web- sites, emails, events, newsletters, phone trees, digital, or other forms of communication.

**The sample practices listed below focus on providing families with information about the academic work that their children do in school and how to help with homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.**

- Include families in learning about the Common Core State Standards that guide instruction and assessment in their child's classroom.
- Provide clear information for families regarding expectations for students in each subject at each grade level, as well as information about student placement, student services, and intervention programs.
- Regularly assign homework that requires students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in classes.
- Provide families with clear information about middle and high school programs and course choices, curricular requirements, teachers' instructional approaches, and state tests or other major assessments. Ensure that families know how their children are progressing in all content areas and how families can help students set and meet achievement goals and solve challenges along the way.
- Assist parents in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations and perform well on assessments.
- Support families in showing the value of literacy through workshops that demonstrate activities they can do at home such as reading for pleasure, sharing information from newspapers, magazines, letters, and texts, and reading recipes, instructions, directions, etc. Emphasize that when a child sees that reading is important at all ages, they are more likely to value and enjoy reading.
- Provide parents with information on how to engage with their children in thought-provoking discussions about classes, homework assignments, school projects, grades, focusing on the positive aspects of school. Support parents in connecting what is being taught in school to life outside of school.
- Support parents in providing time, space and support for homework. Provide tips and guidance, specific terminology to use, help lines, and school website, to access for help. Use resources listed in this module that link to homework purpose, design, and strategies for supporting families.

**Support for families to build on their parenting strengths and needs in order to support children as learners in early childhood through high school is reflected in the practices listed below.**

- Develop an understanding of family backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of children to make more positive connections with families.
  - Provide information to families about support services and resources in their communities.
  - Schedule a school program or event with presentations by professional personnel or local parent educators to help parents learn more about developmentally appropriate parenting issues. Provide childcare and transportation to encourage participation.
  - Develop and disseminate kits or lending library materials built around games, storytelling, conversation starters and other topics for parents to interact with their children.
  - Provide support for families during transition points to preschool, elementary, middle and high school. Plan meetings to help families better understand schools and to help schools better understand families.
  - Establish policies that recognize and respect families' cultural and linguistic diversity. Focus on building trusting and collaborative relationships among educators, families and communities.
  - Establish a family center that provides a comfortable and welcoming space for families, students, school staff, and community members to meet, find useful information, attend workshops on relevant topics of interest to families, and participate in adult education and to volunteer.
- Keep in mind that family centers are just as important in middle and high school as they are in elementary schools. At all levels family centers are a place to gathering place where students and families can drop in to get advice, find useful information, and borrow materials.